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THE INDYPENDENT

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\$2 SUBWAY? RENT & TUITION INCREASES? LAYOFFS?

TAX THE RICH UNTIL THEY WEEP!

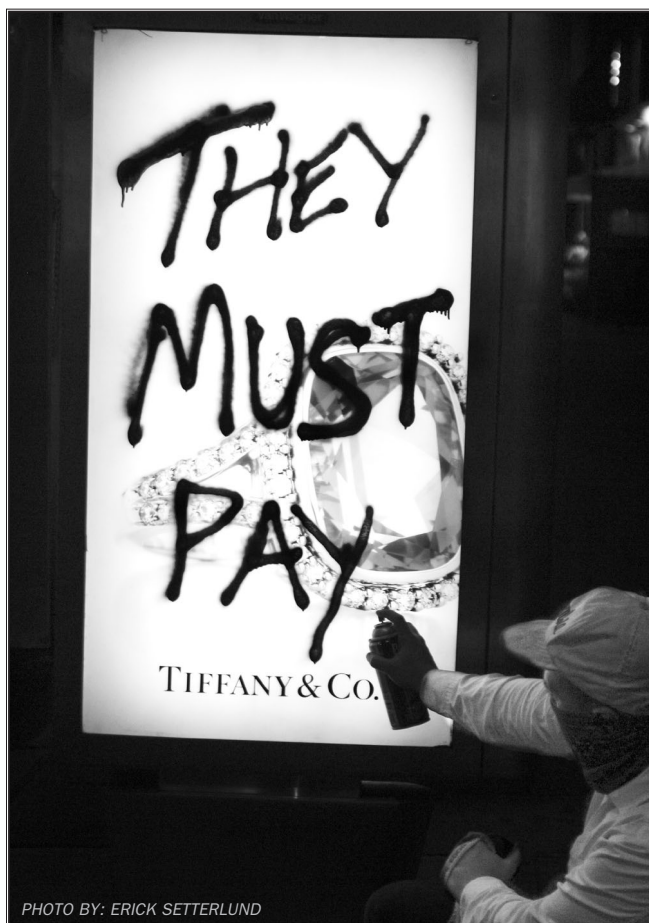


PHOTO BY: ERICK SETTERLUND

BY SANJAY KUMAR

As New York City and the state wrestle over how to bridge a yawning budget chasm, more and more New Yorkers are asking, "Will the Gucci set pay its fair share?"

Teresa Theopano, who works full-time while attending the Hunter College School of Social Work, says the budget crisis is "unacceptable." Her solution is "Tax the people who can afford it. Not the poor people."

Marilyn Garfin, a laugh therapist who lives in Chelsea, says, "I'm a pissed-off New Yorker right now. There's no middle class anymore. Just the rich and everyone else."

In assigning blame for the budget crisis, most politicians and pundits point to the one-two punch of recession and September 11. These certainly had a profound effect, but there is a more fundamental reason. As the stock market exploded during the 1990s and government coffers overflowed, huge tax breaks were lavished on the wealthy – the same ones reaping massive returns from Wall Street investments.

Once the investments bubble popped, the revenue streams ran dry. And now, the Republican governor and mayor want working New Yorkers to shoulder the dual burden of tax increases and service cuts.

The state legislature is proposing various remedies to close a \$12 billion deficit (depending on who's counting): increasing the Personal Income Tax on those earning more than \$100,000 a year; raising the sales tax by a quarter point; closing some corporate loopholes; raiding the state's tobacco settlement fund for billions of dollars; and cutting hundreds of millions in expenditures, mainly education and social services.

Progressives say it's a victory if the rich give back some of the tens of billions of dollars bestowed upon them by Gov. George Pataki. But they call the sales tax increase "regressive" and "despicable."

Pataki's original proposals were much more severe. He wanted to slash healthcare and education spending by \$3 billion. Pataki says he'll veto any tax increases, but earlier called for a massive 1.25 percent increase in the sales tax.

"At present, it appears likely that both houses will have comfortable majorities for the override," says the Working Families Party, "but the Governor is working hard to undermine support, particularly among Republican Senators."

Even if Pataki's position prevails that doesn't mean average folks will be off the tax hook. The burden will shift instead to local governments, resulting in massive property tax increases to close shortfalls in local services and school budgets.

SOAKING THE POOR

In New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg put forth two plans to close a \$3.8 billion gap. Last November when discussing the proposals, he intoned, "The pain of balancing the budget is going to be on everybody."

The first plan depended on the city receiving \$2.7 billion from the state. The second was labeled the "doomsday" budget, but it had a curious definition of "everybody." It called for axing more than 10,000 city employees; closing 40 firehouses; abolishing subway and bus discounts for the elderly and disabled; eliminating after-school programs; and closing zoos, public pools, childhood health centers and recreation centers. Visibly absent were any suggestions that the wealthiest New Yorkers, such as the billionaire mayor, pay their fair share.

The roots of the budget debacle lie in "the very deep tax cuts at the city and state level" during the past decade, says Josh Mason, policy director for the Working Families Party. Mason explains that if the state's tax structure

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NYC'S INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES HOLD ON: AGAINST ALL ODDS



WITH A BANG: Despite the City's cold climate for small business, crowds packed the Bluestocking's grand re-opening party on May 9. PHOTO: Fritz Askew.

By SASHA NEVSKAYA

It is not easy to be independent in New York City. Just as recent budget cuts are having a destructive effect on schools and libraries, climbing rents and big-box superstores like Barnes & Noble are continuing to challenge radical, community-minded booksellers.

Mayday Books and Infoshop was started in 2001. It continues the anarchist tradition of Blackout Books – closed in 1999 by a steep rent increase. Bluestockings, New York's only feminist bookstore, was recently on the verge of going out of business. Soft Skull, an independent publisher since 1994, had to move its Manhattan store to Brooklyn to cut costs.

Located in the lobby of the Theatre for the New City, Mayday offers radical books, local newspapers and zines. The rent is set by the Theatre, which, though low by Manhattan standards, still takes

almost half of Mayday's monthly revenues.

The rest of Mayday's income is spent on buying more inventory, adding to the store's lending library, and providing for a free section.

Mayday relies heavily on volunteer support. The bookstore is open 12-9 p.m. daily, which requires 21 shifts a week filled by 15 to 18 volunteers. Mayday holds weekly meetings in which the group decides on bookstore operation and spending. "This is in a way a project in collective organizing," says Liam Malarsinovic, describing the advantages of Mayday's functioning.

The struggle lies in attracting volunteers that stay. "We have had about one hundred people come through here in the past two years," says Seth Weis.

Bluestockings bookstore and café is a somewhat different venture. Popular among the City's feminists, liberals and academics, as well as modestly profitable,

Bluestockings was in peril this March when owner Kathryn Welsh decided to withdraw from the initiative.

Brooke Lehman and Hitomi Matarese pooled their resources and called for volunteers to renovate the store. Bluestockings reopened two weeks ago.

With no management experience but with Lehman's history of activist organizing and Matarese's artistic background, the co-owners are hoping to raise enough money within six months to turn Bluestockings into a non-profit operation. The bookstore hosts several meetings of local activist groups, schedules a variety of readings, and a weekly Poetry Jam.

Lehman and Matarese are not planning to stray from feminism, but to add to the bookstores already established purposes. "This is not a store exclusively for women, but rather a place for people with a feminist perspective," says Lehman. The owners hope Bluestockings becomes a center for community gatherings and popular education. They are planning to set up computer workstations and after-school programs for children.

Soft Skull's bookstore serves as a "publisher event space" for readings, says manager Thomas Hopkins. Soft Skull is looking to make the store a cooperative enterprise with other independent publishers and journals.

As a press, Soft Skull is growing, publishing 13 books in 2002 and 30 this year. It plans to publish 50 in 2004. Soft Skull receives thousands of unsolicited submissions as well as agent submissions, some rejected by big publishers. "We get manuscripts from top New York agencies," says Richard Nash. Half of the nonfiction published by Soft Skull comes from unsolicited submissions. Fiction publications are about three-quarters agent-submitted. Soft Skull doesn't provide their authors with snappy photos in big magazines. However, it does emphasize good writing and unusual topics.

Mayday Books and Infoshop is located at 155 1st Avenue between 9th and 10th Streets. Bluestockings is at 172 Allen St. between Stanton and Rivington. Soft Skull is located at 71 Bond St. in downtown Brooklyn.

A GUIDE TO NY'S BEST INDEPENDENT BOOKSHOPS

By JED BRANDT AND KAZEMBE

HOUSING WORKS BOOKS

Crosby Street, near Lafayette and just south of Houston – Soho
212.334.3324 www.housingworks.org

With a swank Soho storefront, rocking 20' ceilings and a mahogany paneled interior, this non-profit bookshop is the sexy shrine of independent bookstores. Strong coffee with comfy chairs and they've got a massive, and discriminating, selection of used books and records. Yes, records! Drop in on special nights and find writers like Zadie Smith and Jonathan Ames reading their latest work.

LIBERATION BOOKSTORE

132nd Street and Malcolm X Blvd – Harlem
212.281.4615

Nestled between the world-famous Muslim Mosque #7 and the Schomburg Center for Black Research, Liberation Bookstore is a crossroads where activists and intellectuals meet. Specializing in the literature of the African Diaspora, it's one of the few places you can find the works of J.A. Rodgers, Cheikh Anta Diop and Chancellor Williams at reasonable prices. But the best reason to go is meeting the store's owner Una Mulzac, who will always take time to hang up your flyer and school you on the history of Marcus Garvey.

MACONDO BOOKS

221 West 14th Street – Union Square
212.741.3108

Named for Garcia Marquez's fantastical town, this Spanish-language shop makes up for its drab, fluorescent-lit décor with a great selection of good literature and poetry.

NKIRU BOOKS

732 Washington – Prospect Heights, Brooklyn
718.783.6306 www.nkirucenter.org

The Nkiru Center for Education and Culture continues the legacies of Nkiru Books, Brooklyn's first Black bookstore. Co-owned by Mos Def and Talib Kweli, Nkiru not only has the best books on Black history, but also serves as a meeting space for activists and performances.

REVOLUTION BOOKS

19th Street, between 5th & 6th Avenue – Union Square
212.691.3345

What do you get when party-minded Maoists run the biggest and best-stocked lefty bookstore in New York City? A selection running from Frantz Fanon on the colonial mentality through the latest Boondocks anthology and an extensive selection of used books. But just when your mind starts to wrap around your latest find, you will never escape the saleslady asking if you want a newspaper to go with that book... Rev Books has an unrivaled selection of Global South and international materials, plus Marxist books in Spanish and other languages, including Arabic and Chinese!

ST. MARKS BOOKSHOP

9th Street and 3rd Avenue – East Village
212.260.7853 www.stmarksbookshop.com

It's not just the hipsters in hip-huggers thumbing through Jameson and Octavia Butler that give St. Marks that lumpen intelligentsia vibe. They've got the best selection of critical theory this side of Frankfurt and a selection of recent movement books and pamphlets that cuts signal to noise down tight enough you almost know what you're talking about.



PHOTO: Fritz Askew.

FIRST PERSON

A DOOR CLANGS SHUT

BY ROB GOODIER

Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey is a former one-story warehouse, devoid of windows. Its commonplace outward appearance belies the presence of 270 men and women imprisoned inside.

The majority are asylum seekers who entered the United States hoping for protection from oppressive governments, war, torture or death. Many of them were picked up after September 11. They are now awaiting a board review that will determine their status—some will stay, but many face deportation.

On a rainy morning in mid-April I visited the detention center with three Sojourners. The Sojourners are a coalition of volunteers—from Riverside Church and Makor Jewish Cultural Center—who comfort detainees through their presence, letters, gifts and support.

Two of the volunteers expected to meet new prisoners; the other was visiting a Pakistani man he had met some weeks before.

We gained admission with our driver's licenses, handing them to a uniformed guard behind a sliding glass window. We told her the room and bed numbers of the people we wanted to see. By the inmates' accounts, up to 40 people sleep in a room on bunk beds. We passed through a metal detector and waited in front of a thick steel door. The door slowly peeled back, its machinery shuddering, and we entered a room that looked like an airlock.

"That clanging door. That noise just sticks in your head," Meaghan Tuohey-Kay, a lawyer for the detainee-advocacy group Interfaith Refugee Action Team—Elizabeth, told me later.

As the door closed behind us, another slid open revealing the visiting room. It was antiseptically white and austere. A counter, partitioned into cubicles and punctuated by telephones, rimmed a wall of Plexiglas and a whitewashed steel frame. The room is closed to the public and not accountable to federal prison regulations.

Inside, a young woman cried as she hunched over the telephone receiver whispering to a man on the other side of the wall.

A guard ushered in another young man, who sat at the counter and spoke to one of the volunteers. He had lived inside for more than two months and counted himself lucky to be working in the kitchen. It was a distraction from the monotony of TV and

bright lights that are always on. He received one dollar for a day's work.

Some of the Sojourners send money orders, newspaper clippings and magazines to the prisoners. The prison corporations that own and operate the detention facilities sell phone cards and toiletries to the prisoners. One man I spoke with saves his \$5 weekly income and buys a phone card on Saturdays. He can then call his family in Africa for two-and-a-half minutes.

We left the center an hour later. One of the volunteers never spoke with the detainee to whom he had been assigned. The man, a Muslim, spent the hour in prayer in his room.

On May 4, I visited the Wackenhut Detention Center in Jamaica, Queens. There, the visiting room is softened by the stains of use and living. Those inside spoke to each other through metal grates in glass partitions. We pressed our ears up to the stainless steel circle to hear a young man speak. It was more personal; we had to be closer and could smell his breath.

"Even though you're prepared for it, it's still a shocking experience to walk in there the first time," said Sarah Terlow, a volunteer. "The x-ray machine... what to say, how to introduce oneself, start a conversation..."

The first prisoner Sarah met with did not speak English, and the woman felt isolated as one of the few Spanish speakers in a mostly Arab and African population. The guards taunted her in English, and she could not sleep under the 24-hour glare of the lights. She had no friends or visitors except Sarah.

John Vanier, another volunteer, has visited detainees since 1998. Last month he began to visit a newly detained man. "It can be a very rewarding experience to help people," he said. "The second time I went to visit him he didn't pick up the phone right away; he just touched his hands to the glass."

Previously, John would visit Mohamed I. Mubarak, an asylum seeker from Sri Lanka, for much of the four years he was detained. Mubarak was arrested at John F. Kennedy Airport en route to Vancouver. Rather than allow the United States to deport him to Sri Lanka, where he feared torture or death, he appealed the review board's decisions. Each appeal before the board (already inundated with cases) receives attention every two to three months.

John vouched for him in a letter to the Canadian government and, working with Mubarak's family in Vancouver, found a church that would sponsor him upon his

release. He now lives in Canada with his family and telephones John once a week.

"I've developed a whole family from another country," said John.

At a forum on April 24 sponsored by the Manhattan Neighborhood Network, moderator Aarti Shahani of the Immigrant Defense Project said, "Since September 11 the United States has severely reduced the number of people to whom they grant asylum."

Tuohey-Kay said that none of the detainees in these facilities are being held on terrorist charges.

"They presented themselves to the U.S. government. They are the least likely to be a danger. They fled their countries, fought for freedom, and they came here and were met by a prison cell and a jail guard—it's un-American. These are the people who would build a democracy. These are people who were fighting Saddam Hussein, for example, long before President George W. Bush could find Iraq on a map."

THE INDY GOES BI-WEEKLY!



The paper that Naomi Klein says "mixes the spirit of direct action with a searing critique of corporate power" is now publishing every two weeks. Look for even more timely reporting as we let people speak for themselves from the streets of Baghdad to the jungles of Colombia, the shantytowns of South Africa to the villages of East Timor. We continue to look at those resisting the Pentagon and Wall Street reign of terror, from the fight at home for housing, quality education and civil liberties to the broader struggle against corporate globalization. **Don't miss an issue—subscribe today!**

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CITYBRIEF

LOW-INCOME HOUSING CHIEFS STEP DOWN IN CORRUPTION SCANDAL

The president of the Housing Development Corporation and other senior officials resigned May 6 as authorities continue to investigate alleged corruption in an agency responsible for developing low- and middle-income housing.

Charles Brass, David Boccio and Henry Fried stepped down one day after Luke Cusack, 32, a top aide to former agency president Russell Harding, pleaded guilty in federal court to helping his boss embezzle money and take vacations at public expense. Harding, 38, a Giuliani-era appointee and son of longtime Liberal Party leader Ray Harding, is accused of using hundreds of thousands of dollars in public money on personal items. He has pleaded innocent and is scheduled to go on trial July 7.

NYC'ERS HAVE TWO CHANCES TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST PRELIMINARY RENT HIKES

The Rent Guidelines Board tentatively approved rent hikes of as much as 8.5 percent on May 5, the largest since 1989. The vote was 6-3. The final vote will be held June 19. Angry New Yorkers will have a chance to speak out at public hearings that will be held June 3 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Spector Hall, 22 Reade St. and June 17 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. at the Great Hall at Cooper Union at 7 E. Seventh St. For more information, see www.metcouncil.net.

TAKEN FOR A RIDE

The Straphangers Campaign went to court May 9 urging Judge Louis York to issue a temporary injunction against the MTA's 33 percent hike in subway and bus fares. A Manhattan judge rejected an earlier plea when the fare hike went into effect May 4. Reports issued last month by the city and state comptrollers charge the MTA hid more than \$500 million in surplus funds to make its finances appear worse to the public.

HUNTER COLLEGE ACTIVISTS WIN BIG TIME

In a referendum on anti-war activism, the Student Liberation Action Movement (SLAM) routed conservative opponents to win Hunter College's student elections for an eighth consecutive year. SLAM prevailed by a two-to-one margin over Hunter First, a coalition of right-wing Israeli students, members of Hillel and Honors students that campaigned under the slogan of "Operation Hunter Freedom." Prior to the election, SLAM was active in a dozen anti-war rallies, as well as die-ins, speak-outs, marches and an overnight takeover of Hunter President Jennifer Raab's office. A progressive slate of student activists also won student elections at Brooklyn College.

LIBERAL BISHOP REMEMBERED

Paul Moore Jr., retired Episcopal Bishop of New York and staunch advocate of progressive causes, died May 1. He was 83. Serving as Bishop from 1972 to 1989, Moore held rallies to combat racism and nuclear proliferation. He also helped open the Episcopal Church to the ordination of women, and ordained the first gay woman as an Episcopal priest in 1977. Though ailing from cancer, Moore continued to dissent in his final days as he spoke out against the U.S. conquest of Iraq.

Sojourners is looking for volunteers. For information, please contact Aster Kidane at the Riverside Church, email: akidane@theRiversideChurchny.org.

COMMENT ON THE NEWS: WWW.NYC.INDYMEDIA.ORG

NY BUDGET

from page 1

were still the same as in 1995, when Pataki assumed office, tax receipts would be \$12 billion higher – the same as the current state deficit. And since 1994, says the WFP, the share of state revenue from corporate taxes has declined by more than one-third.

During the go-go nineties, Mason says an “irresponsible political leadership” in Albany and New York City “used a temporary economic boom to push through permanent tax cuts.”

LIVE BY THE SWORD

The crisis has laid bare the city (and state’s) dilemma. New York is a company town; it lives and dies by Wall Street.

The securities industry accounts for 5 percent of total employment in the Big Apple, but generates 19 percent of total wages and salaries. As a source of economic growth, Wall Street accounted for 56 percent of the increase in real earnings in the city from 1992-1997. It also contributed about half of the growth in the Gross State Product from 1992-1999. During the 1980s, when the state’s economy grew at a much faster rate, Wall Street contributed less than 8 percent of that growth.

A report issued by New York State Comptroller Carl McCall in 1998 underscored the “overwhelming centrality of Wall Street in the city’s resurgence.” During the 1980s eight of 16 economic sectors contributed to that decade’s economic boom. During the 1990s, however, manufacturing jobs dwindled while city bigwigs lavished money and attention on the finance industry.

The result was predictable. McCall concluded that Wall Street accounted for over half of all jobs created from 1995-1997, and from 1992-1998, it accounted for half of the \$2.7 billion growth in four tax categories.

During the nineties, Mayor Giuliani pushed through tax cuts that mainly benefited the rich and cost the city \$2.3 billion in revenues annually, according to Mike Wallace, author of *A New Deal for New York*. The giveaways included chopping the commercial rent tax, ending an income tax surcharge imposed during the last recession, and \$2 billion in tax rebates for large corporations.

HIDDEN TAXES

At the state level, Mason says, “Two-thirds of the tax cuts went to the richest 20 percent of New Yorkers.”

Even without the tax cuts, the city and state would still be struggling with deficits, albeit smaller ones. The city closed last year’s budget gap by cutting \$1.1 billion in services and jacking property taxes by 18.5 percent.

City residents appear as if they are going to pay for the property tax hike in the form of increased rents for regulated units. The Rent Guidelines Board has approved a tentative increase in two-year leases of 8.5 percent, the biggest jump since the 1980s.

New Yorkers will pay in other ways, such as the 33 percent increase in subway and bus fares, the increased sales tax, which is rising to 8.625 percent in the city, and large tuition hikes for public college students. In exchange, the city will still fire 4,000 employees, eliminate all summer school programs, end lunches for the elderly at city shelters and cut funding to parks and libraries.

Increasing the sales tax is counter-productive, say many policy analysts. It’s an extremely regressive tax. Low and middle-income households spend most of their money locally and on taxable items. With more money going to taxes, it means less being pumped into the economy resulting in business failures and job losses. Additionally, tax dodging increases as do out-of-state shopping trips to avoid the sales tax.

The budget battle is drawing to a close, but there will almost certainly be another in a year’s time. For one, the state is using \$4 billion in tobacco money this year, money that won’t be available next year. Progressive groups are planning to push for more progressive taxation, making the rich pay their share instead of balancing the budget on the backs of working New Yorkers.

BUDGET TRADE-OFFS

Almost every state is facing a budget crisis. Some are shortening the school year, cutting medicare or just slashing programs across the board to close the shortfall. Many states are asking why the federal government can’t come to the rescue. After all, it’s found the bucks for trillion-dollar tax cuts, a huge increase in military spending and \$75 billion for the war on Iraq – an amount that would more than cover every state’s deficit.

The National Priorities Project, a group that examines the community impact of government taxing and spending policies, offers a tool on its web site that allows users to see in numbers the repercussions of federal budget programs on various programs in their home state.

•Tax cuts for the richest 1 percent of New Yorkers will amount to \$4.2 billion in 2003. Instead, the money could pay the salaries of 55,618 elementary school teachers.

•Fighter jet programs next fiscal year will burn through \$864.2 million in taxpayer money from New York alone. For the same amount the state could pay for 129,661 housing vouchers.

•New York’s share of a 10-year \$550 billion tax cut would total \$8.9 billion in FY2004. The money could instead pay for health care for 2,914,913 children.

•The \$75 billion tab for the Iraq war will cost New Yorkers \$5.1 billion. The toppling of the statue made for good TV, but tell that to the 559,346 state residents who could have received proper healthcare for a year.

•New Yorkers will shell out \$1.3 billion for the nation’s nuclear weapons arsenal in fiscal year 2004. Or the state could place 154,712 children in Head Start.

•Taxpayers in New York will pay \$664.5 million for ballistic missile defense in FY2004, enough money to purchase 2,953 fire trucks.

Tax revenues may seem to be in short supply, but not suggestions as to how to deal with the budget crisis. The question is who pays. Republicans in City Hall and the governor’s mansion are willing to impoverish the poor and working New Yorkers. Social justice advocates counter that the ultra-rich should part with a few of their baubles.

BUDGET OPTIONS

PROGRESSIVE INCOME TAX INCREASE.

According to the State Department of Taxation and Finance, cuts in the Personal Income Tax (PIT) since 1994 reduced Fiscal Year 2003 tax collections by \$5.6 billion, and will reduce tax collections in FY 2004 by another \$6.2 billion. The legislature has approved a tentative increase, but it can do more. One proposal involves a .7 percent surcharge on incomes over \$100,000, and an additional .7 percent surcharge on income over \$200,000. Another proposal is for a 2 percent surcharge on income over \$200,000.

REVENUE RAISED: \$2.8 BILLION — \$3.4 BILLION IN THE FIRST YEAR.

STOCK TRANSFER TAX.

Until 1981, stock trades in New York were taxed at a nickel per share, with a maximum of \$350 for any given transaction.

Restoring the tax at half the old rate would today raise \$4 billion per year, which could be split evenly between city and state.

REVENUE RAISED: \$2 BILLION EACH FOR THE CITY AND STATE ANNUALLY.

REPEAL THE ROCKEFELLER DRUG LAWS.

By treating substance abuse as a public health issue rather than continuing to criminalize it, the state could release the 20,000 drug offenders it currently incarcerates at a high cost.

EXPENSES SAVED: UP TO \$700 MILLION A YEAR.

EXPAND THE BOTTLE LAW.

Bottling companies receive unclaimed bottle deposits to the tune of \$120 million this year alone. The state could easily demand that the unclaimed deposits be returned to local governments. The bottle law could also be expanded to include all carbonated and non-carbonated drinks.

REVENUE RAISED: UP TO \$131 MILLION ANNUALLY FOR THE CITY.

TOLL THE EAST RIVER AND HARLEM RIVER BRIDGES.

Transportation Alternatives suggests placing tolls on the 12 city-owned bridges between Manhattan and Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx. One option is one-way toll on cars entering Manhattan with a \$7 toll on the four East River bridges and a \$3.50 charge on the eight Harlem River bridges.

REVENUE RAISED: \$520 MILLION DURING FIRST FULL YEAR OF OPERATION.

CHARGE FOR FILM AND TELEVISION PERMITS.



New York’s streets are an irresistible lure for Hollywood. On average there are more than 20,000 location-shooting “days” a year. Filmmakers are not charged for the permits the city provides (on top of being exempted from state and most local taxes). One possibility is to charge \$250 for a one-day permit.

REVENUE RAISED: \$5 MILLION A YEAR.

STOP TRASH COLLECTION OF LAWN CLIPPINGS.

The city pays for the collection and out-of-state dumping of an estimated 100,000 tons of grass clippings from residential yards. The average cost of the four outer borough’s garbage export contracts is \$65 per ton.

EXPENSES SAVED: \$6.5 MILLION A YEAR.

ELIMINATE OPERATION CONDOR.



City spending on police overtime has tripled since 1997, peaking at \$332 million in 2002, excluding World Trade Center-related activity. This year’s budget includes \$40 million for Operation Condor, the city’s notorious “quality-of-life” campaign. Total expenditures for the program in 2002 were \$62 million.

EXPENSES SAVED: \$40 MILLION – \$62 MILLION A YEAR.

STOP PAYING FOR WASHING-UP TIME FOR COPS.

Currently, police officers work 242 tours a year. The last 35 minutes of an officer’s shift are reserved for debriefings, washing up and changing clothes. Many observers say that is excessive.

State law mandates that police work a minimum number of hours per year. Chopping 20 minutes off of a shift change would mean they could work 10 more tours a year. That means the city could maintain the same level of policing while eliminating 1,000 positions.

EXPENSES SAVED: ABOUT \$70 MILLION A YEAR.

TAX LUXURY APARTMENT RENTALS.

More than 74,000 apartments in the city fetch \$2,000 a month in rent or more. One proposal is to place a 1 percent tax on the owners of the buildings with these pricey units.

REVENUE RAISED: \$27 MILLION IN FIRST YEAR.

For more information on budget options, go to the New York City Independent Budget Office website at www.ibo.nyc.ny.us.



ONE-ARMED BENNETT

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

It's not nice to celebrate the misfortunes of others, but William Bennett deserves it.

Bennett, federal drug czar during the Bush I administration, is the self-appointed moral arbiter of the nation and author of morality texts *The Book of Virtues* and *The Death of Outrage*. *The Washington Monthly* recently revealed that he is also a compulsive gambler, losing \$340,000 at the slots in one day in Atlantic City last year and \$500,000 in two days in Las Vegas last month.

We don't have a problem with gambling. Lay off our potsmoking, and we won't care if you want to lay five units on the Jets minus-3 over Denver.

Ain't nobody's business but your own. But Bennett is the man behind some of the harshest and most fanatical drug policies in U.S. history, and such a self-righteous prig that we have to enjoy the sight of him getting hoisted by his own petard. There hasn't been a scandal this tasty since fundamentalist preacher Jimmy Swaggart got caught with a cheap hooker in a seedy New Orleans motel.

Bennett's drug policies are not ancient history. Current federal drug czar John Walters is his protégé, dubbed "Bennett's Mini-Me" by the Drug Policy Alliance's Ethan Nadelmann. Drug use is "morally

wrong," they both argue, because it constitutes defiance of lawful authority.

That ideology is the basis for the Bush II regime's mass prosecutions of medical marijuana users and glass pipe manufacturers, and their ads claiming pot smokers finance al-Qaeda. In their 1996 book *Body Count*, Walters and Bennett expanded that worldview into a denunciation of the sixties counterculture, blaming its celebration of getting

of citing the worst hard-drug horror stories and applying them to marijuana as part of the scattershot category of "illegal drugs."

While most people would agree that society's worst drug problems are the junkie who steals anything he can, the crack gang that hits a 4-year-old kid with stray bullets in a turf battle, or the methamphetamine lab that threatens to blow up a trailer park, Bennett and Walters argue that the casual

host of immoralities, from pot to promiscuity, homosexuality to hip-hop. In his view, Bill Clinton lying about an extramarital blowjob was a far viler abomination than Richard Nixon lying about bugging his opponents or Ronald Reagan lying about funding terrorists in Central America. But oddly, Bennett doesn't speak against gambling. He denounces the sixties counterculture for promoting instant gratification instead of hard work, self-denial and thrift.

What captures the spirit of instant gratification better than pulling the lever of a slot machine or playing video poker?

Bennett claims that he more or less broke even and that he wasn't blowing the "milk money." But the millions he threw away show contempt for the working people of America. He lost more money in one day than most people can spend on a house. The \$500 chips that he tossed into slot machines and lost a few seconds later represent almost three weeks of take-home pay for a woman deboning catfish in Mississippi, a week's worth of class time and lesson planning for a teacher.

"I view it as drinking," Bennett told *The Washington Monthly* when asked about his gambling. "If you can't handle it, don't do it."

That sounds exactly like the libertarian argument for legalizing drugs.

“The \$500 chips that he tossed into slot machines and lost a few seconds later represent almost three weeks of take-home pay for a woman deboning catfish in Mississippi.”



high and its "expansive notion of 'rights'" as the philosophical progenitor of the unhuman, remorseless teenage "superpredators" spawned by ghetto welfare mothers.

Ironically, crack-trade violence peaked during Bush I's term, when Bennett was drug czar and Walters his aide. *Body Count* largely ignored that fact. Instead, Bennett and Walters used the cheap debating trick

user is the problem, because "casual use is the vector by which drug use spreads."

In other words, drug users who haven't screwed up their lives should be punished because the example of a pot-smoking lawyer or basketball player will make people think marijuana isn't so bad.

In his zeal to once again make the United States a moral nation, Bennett condemns a

UNDER THE EYE

AIRPORT SCREENING SYSTEM THREATENS PRIVACY RIGHTS

BY F. TIMOTHY MARTIN

First it was Operation TIPS, then Total Information Awareness (TIA). Now the feds are serving up to the public a new acronym as they continue to remind us just how fragile privacy rights are in this country.

Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS II) will require each passenger to give their full name, address, phone number and date of birth before boarding a plane. Delta Air Lines recently started testing the system at a few airports. It is slated for full release at airports across the nation by the summer of 2004.

Recently bounced a check? Been issued a citation for jaywalking? Blew off a parking ticket? The CAPPS II system will consider all of it as it cycles through your credit, banking and criminal history to determine whether to infringe on your constitutional right for freedom of travel.

Developed by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in conjunction with Lockheed Martin, CAPPS II is intended to ease the burden on airport screening by quickly rating each passenger to determine their potential to disrupt a commercial flight. The system translates this score into one of three colors that gets assigned to all travelers — green means you go, yellow means extra scrutiny and red — well, just hope you get green or yellow.

If the thought of having a government-run computer system checking your credit rating each time you fly makes you uneasy, you're not alone. Civil rights groups, legislators and other concerned citizens are speaking out against invasive airport screening techniques.

"If we rush into invasive cyber-surveillance without first assessing its potential harm to both freedom and security, we run the risk of irreparably harming our basic democracy," said Katie Corrigan, an American Civil Liberties Union legislative counsel in a press statement on May 6. "Congress needs to weigh the costs and benefits of these new technologies before they are ever used against Americans."

CAPPS II is not the first airline screening system to come under public fire. The TSA currently administers two

secret airport watch lists, a "no fly" list and a "selectee" list, which requires passengers to undergo additional searches and questioning.

Hundreds of travelers have been detained since their implementation, some for weeks at a time without any notification given to their families. Many detainees complain that they were unfairly singled out because their names are similar to those of a suspect on the list. Numerous peace activists have also been targeted, including two publishers of the San Francisco-based *War Times* newspaper who were held last November.

Given the frightening track record of the TSA-administered list, critics are concerned that the new CAPPS II system will only lead to a further erosion of privacy rights.

"This is the worst way to run a suspicion system," said Lee Tien, a senior staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation. "It doesn't give any chance of knowing why there's suspicion. We just don't see how you can maintain due process when it's not clear what's actually going into risk assessment."

For their part, the developers of CAPPS II state that "privacy and security are equal priorities." In a press release given in March, the TSA attempted to assuage fears by claiming it "will not see the data used to generate scores" and "will not retain any information whatsoever about travelers." The same release dismisses critics who contend that credit and banking histories would inhibit a person from flying.

So why bother checking?

Privacy rights groups are asking that question as they attempt to mount resistance to CAPPS II. "When the federal government tells me not to worry about privacy because we have information technology in place, that's not very comforting," said Tien.

The ACLU is also at the forefront of opposition to the federal transportation watch lists created in the wake of September 11. In California, 339 air passengers have been detained when their names showed up on the secret no fly list, many of them

innocent travelers who found it nearly impossible to clear their names once identified as on the list. On April 22, the ACLU of Northern California filed a federal lawsuit to challenge what they say is a violation of privacy and public information laws.

Others have taken issue with Delta Air Lines because it is test-piloting CAPPS II at several airports. Bill Scannell, a former journalist who currently works for a software company in California, has created a website, www.boycottdelta.org, protesting the airline's decision to facilitate the program.

"I'm just a regular guy. My politics are moderate. But when we start talking about color-coding Americans that's just an absolute outrage," said Scannell. "The site went up on the third of March. Since then we have had up to 8,000 emails with 80 percent in support. The other 20 percent would probably be quite happy having chips embedded in the back of their heads. That's not the America I signed up for."



OPERATION HOMELAND RESISTANCE

83 people were arrested May 5-7 at protests in front of the Federal Detention Center in Lower Manhattan. The arrestees, primarily from communities of color, said they were seeking to "build an effective anti-war movement that goes beyond the goals of what is called the 'peace movement' in the U.S."

IRAQ IN BRIEF

BY MIKE BURKE

MAYBE IT WAS ALL ABOUT OIL AFTER ALL

After ignoring the Security Council before invading Iraq, the Bush administration has now asked the United Nations to legitimize the Iraq occupation and shift control of the Iraqi oil to the United States and Britain.

"The proposal would give the United States far greater authority over Iraq's lucrative oil industry than administration officials have previously acknowledged," reports the *Washington Post*.

The resolution was submitted just days after it was revealed that Halliburton — which Dick Cheney ran until he became Vice President — would play a far greater role in the production and distribution of the world's second largest oil supply.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) said the revelation seemed "at odds with the administration's repeated assurances that the Iraqi oil belongs to the Iraqi people."

The Bush administration gave multiple reasons for the Iraqi invasion; none of them mentioned oil. How has pre-invasion rhetoric been matching up with post-war reality?

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

On the weapons of mass destruction front, no smoking gun has yet emerged after months of searching. Tests are being conducted on a trailer found in Northern Iraq that is alleged to be a mobile biowarfare laboratory. Numerous other reports have repeatedly surfaced about weapons of mass destruction being uncovered; all have proven untrue. Among critics of the war, and even among some supporters, skepticism is running high. Writing in *The New York Times*, Paul Krugman asks, "One wonders whether most of the public will ever learn that the original case for war has turned out to be false."

LIBERATION OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE

Protests continue to intensify across Iraq against the U.S. presence. In Mosul, U.S. troops gunned down 13 anti-occupation demonstrators. U.S. forces are also monitoring and blocking broadcasts of Al Jazeera on Mosul's only TV station. "Yes, what we are looking at is censorship, but you can censor something that is intended to inflame passions," said 101st commander, Maj. Gen. David Petraeus. Also on the media front, the U.S. government has hired a fundamentalist Christian outfit, Grace Digital Media, to help produce a new Arabic satellite station for Iraq to counter Al Jazeera.

On the reconstruction end, U.S. plans have been slow to gain speed because of a lack of supplies, training and planning. Army Sgt. Keith Hudson, whose 3rd Infantry Division unit patrols Baghdad, expressed his frustration to the *Washington Post*: "I have no answers for the people. I feel like a paid liar. To look these people in the eye and say, 'Tomorrow, you'll have electricity.' And then, tomorrow, they look you in the eye and say, 'When?'"

The *Guardian* reports growing fear of a cholera outbreak in Basra as the Iraqi medical system comes close to collapse. Humanitarian groups like CARE face similar hardships. Near Basra, CARE reports its warehouse was first bombed by the United States, then looted.

REGIME CHANGE

While Saddam Hussein is gone, the United States has been returning Baath Party members to power. In early May, hundreds of Iraqi doctors dressed in white lab suits marched in Baghdad chanting "New clean era! New clean figures!" They were protesting Washington's selection of a prominent Baath Party official to head the Health Ministry, who later resigned.

WHITE HOUSE LAUNCHES NEW IRAQI ECONOMY 2.0

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND ITS NEOCONSERVATIVE ADVISORS PLAN AN EXTREME MAKEOVER FOR IRAQ

BY ERIC LAURSEN

The conquest was just the first stage. Now that U.S. troops are squatting in Baghdad, the Bush administration is pushing ahead with phase two of its bold agenda to remake the Middle East, starting with the privatization of Iraq.

In a speech delivered at the University of South Carolina on May 9, Bush proposed "the establishment of a U.S.-Middle East free trade area within a decade." He said that by "replacing corruption and self-dealing, with free markets and fair laws, the people of the Middle East will grow in prosperity and freedom."

A confidential document circulating among contractors paints a different picture of U.S. plans to reshape Iraq's economy. Titled "Moving the Iraqi Economy From Recovery to Sustainable Growth," the document was leaked to the *Wall Street Journal* in a May 1 story. The central elements include privatizing oil and other state-owned assets, creating a "world-class stock exchange" to trade shares in newly privatized companies, imposing a consumption tax and creating a new Iraqi currency.

The plan is startlingly similar to schemes adopted by many former Soviet-bloc countries, often with disastrous results, in the 1990s. And like them, Iraq is expected to assume its new laissez-faire capitalist guise almost overnight. The stock exchange, for example, is supposed to be up and running in just a year.

From Poland to Kazakhstan, post-Communist governments carried out mass privatizations and turned their state-run pension systems into individual investment accounts. In almost all cases, wages were too meager for workers to build savings, the stock markets were inefficient, and the privatization process was rife with sleaze as ex-apparatchiks creamed off the best deals. On top of all that, the pension funds quickly lost most of their value.

Given the rapid timeframe for shaping Iraq into a Middle Eastern model of capitalism, and the involvement of dubious figures like Iraqi National Congress chief Ahmad Chalabi, much the same pattern is possible there.

"It'll look bad for us if Iraq is a basket case," warns Dean Baker, an economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

At the hub of the administration's drive to remake Iraq is the U.S. Agency for International Development, an agency that, oddly enough, was once a neoconservative whipping boy for supposed liberal do-goodism in foreign policy. Under Ronald Reagan, however, USAID was

Handing out the plum assignment to rebuild Iraq's phone system won't be so easy for the White House. At least two U.S.-based providers are squabbling over the cell-phone market: Qualcomm, whose CDMA wireless technology is used mostly in the United States, and Texas Instruments, which supplies GSM chips used in much of the rest of the world.

Naturally, the Christian Right hopes to lend a hand. The U.S. Broadcasting Board

"Putting Dan Amstutz in charge of agricultural reconstruction in Iraq is like putting Saddam Hussein in the chair of a human rights commission,"

— Oxfam policy director Kevin Watkins

mandated to promote free-market agendas. Since then it has aggressively used foreign aid as leverage to privatize everything from government-owned businesses to pension programs.

The White House is pushing for the World Bank to get involved in Iraq, too. (Iraq severed ties with the Bank and the International Monetary Fund decades ago.) The Bank is a devoted champion of privatization and has often collaborated with USAID. It also has a close relationship with the Adam Smith Institute, a neo-conservative think-tank based in London. In March, the ASI published a paper advocating privatization of Iraq's state-owned enterprises, and depositing the shares in "private pension funds in which each Iraqi citizen has a stake."

Meanwhile, former Shell Oil Co. head Philip Carroll is reconfiguring the Iraqi oil ministry. His board is filled with oil industry figures, including Iraqi exile Muhammad-Ali Zaini, who once served on a State Department-funded panel that recommended opening up Iraq's oil sector to foreign companies.

To lead agricultural reconstruction, the administration has picked Dan Amstutz. He's an ex-senior executive at Cargill who as a Reagan-era trade negotiator advocated cracking open agricultural markets in other countries.

"Putting Dan Amstutz in charge of agricultural reconstruction in Iraq is like putting Saddam Hussein in the chair of a human rights commission," Oxfam policy director Kevin Watkins told *The Guardian*.

of Governors, which runs Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, is packaging TV news broadcasts for Iraq. The agency has outsourced Iraq's evening news program to Grace Digital Media, a company controlled by Christian fundamentalists. The aggressively pro-Israel Grace vows to include "aggressive proclamations" that will "change the news" to reflect the Kingdom of God and its purposes in its broadcasts, according to a May 2 AlterNet story.

Aside from feathering the nests of corporations tight with the White House, the plan aims to weld the 2.0 version of the Iraqi state as tightly as possible to the free-market model. Toward that end, the Bush administration hopes to induce the new government to adopt the dollar as its official currency. A similar attempt was made in Afghanistan, but failed.

The administration says the decision on currency will be up to the Iraqi people. On the ground, however, occupying troops are already paying for local services and salaries of Iraqis in dollars. And the USAID contracting document calls for collecting and destroying all the old Iraqi bills by July. If Iraq "dollarizes," molding it to the U.S. economic model will be that much easier.

In the strangest twist yet to the story of Iraq's rebuilding, Bush administration allies are floating the idea that international lenders should forgive Iraq's debts (Iraq owes large sums of money to France and Russia) — something neo-conservatives refuse to consider for any other country.



GETTING FILTHY RICH IN AMERICA

BY VANESSA HRADSKY

RUMSFELD & IRAQ:

The National Security Archive, located at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., posted recently declassified documents on its website, including a video clip detailing the meeting between Donald Rumsfeld and Saddam Hussein in December 1983 and May 1984. Rumsfeld went to Baghdad as President Reagan's envoy, and, among other topics, discussed alternative routes to transport Iraq's oil, and the U.S. and Iraq's mutual interest in keeping the region stable and out of the control of Iran.

RUMSFELD & NORTH KOREA:

On April 28, 2003, *Fortune* magazine reported yet another link between Rumsfeld and the "axis of evil." The article discusses how in early 2000, while Rumsfeld was on their Board of Directors, a Zurich-based engineering firm called ABB signed a \$200 million deal with North Korea to provide the design and key components for their nuclear reactors. Rumsfeld refuses to talk about it. But *Fortune* quoted ABB spokesman Bjorn Edlund as saying that "board members were informed about this project." Rumsfeld was apparently in charge of lobbying in Washington to help ABB obtain the deal.

MINISTERS OF DISINFORMATION

As American forces rumbled toward Baghdad in the war's final moments, Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf continued to bluster that U.S. troops were suffering heavy casualties and nearing certain defeat. His bizarre pronouncements earned him a cult following in the United States, and his fame has only grown since Saddam Hussein was deposed. A website, www.welovetheiraqiinformationminister.com, has been erected in his honor.

Now, *New York Times* correspondent Judith Miller has undertaken an equally Herculean task: convincing the world that Iraq really did possess weapons of mass destruction that threatened humanity. Miller has risen to the challenge with remarkable skill.

Despite her best efforts, Miller has yet to gain the infamy enjoyed by Minister Saeed al-Sahaf. At least not yet. www.welovejudithmilleratthentimes.com, anyone?



"There are no American infidels in Baghdad. Never!"

IRAQI INFORMATION MINISTER **MOHAMMED SAEED AL-SAHAF**

"Our initial assessment is that they will all die."

"I can say, and I am responsible for what I am saying, that they have started to commit suicide under the walls of Baghdad. We will encourage them to commit more suicides quickly."

"That bastard the American Minister of Defense Rumsfeld, and I won't say shamelessly, because they don't know what shame means. These are criminals. The whole word [sic] can hear the warning sirens. This criminal sitting in the White House is a pathetic criminal and his Defense Minister deserves to be beaten."

"We're going to drag the drunken junkie nose of Bush through Iraq's desert, him and his follower dog Blair... There are 26 million Saddams in Iraq."

"Those Iraqi fighters are slapping those gangsters on the face, and then when they flee, they will kick their backsides."

"They are retreating on all fronts. Their military effort is a subject of laughter throughout the world."

"I can assure you that those villains will recognize, will discover in appropriate time in the future how stupid they are and how they are pretending things which have never taken place."

"I think they found something more than a smoking gun."

JUDITH MILLER, NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT

"I think they found something more than a 'smoking gun.' What they've found is what is being called here by the members of MET Alpha – that's Mobile Exploitation Team Alpha – what they found is a silver bullet in the form of a person, an Iraqi individual, a scientist, as we've called him, who really worked on the programs, who knows them firsthand, and who has led MET Team Alpha people to some pretty startling conclusions."

— *The News Hour With Jim Lehrer*, April 22nd

"Under the terms of her accreditation to report on the activities of MET Alpha, this reporter was not permitted to interview the scientist or visit his home. Nor was she permitted to write about the discovery for three days, and the copy was then submitted for a check by military officials."

"Those officials asked that details of what chemicals were uncovered be deleted."

— *NYTimes*, April 21st

"Based on what the Iraqi scientist had said... military officials said they now believed that they might not find large caches of illicit chemicals or biological agents, at least in Iraq."

— *NYTimes*, April 23rd

"This reporter was not permitted to visit the warehouse but heard descriptions of it from Americans who went to the site."

"Iraqis have told American weapons experts that Iraqi scientists tested various agents on dogs and other animals at this site, the experts said. There was no immediate way to verify this claim."

— *NYTimes*, April 23rd



Illustrations
Terry Furry

O, SWEDEN!

BY DONALD PANETH

STOCKHOLM, Sweden – The peaceful nature of life in Sweden offers an extraordinary contrast to the harsh, uncertain character of existence in the United States. Many aspects of life in Sweden are sweet, even idyllic. American life is like a barroom brawl which spills into the streets.

"I see America spreading disaster," Henry Miller wrote in *Black Spring*. "I see America as a black curse upon the world. I see a long night settling in." Miller left the United States for Paris, where he lived for nearly a decade.

Upset by yet another U.S. attack on a small country that could not defend itself, I flew to Stockholm at the end of March. As in the past, upon arriving at Stockholm's Arlanda Airport I relaxed, and no longer felt the tension or constant wariness I experience in New York. I was hardly aware of passing through customs. The airport was calm and uncrowded. I boarded a bus into the city.

Stockholm is beautiful, as beautiful as Paris, though less flamboyant, more aristocratic. Few of the buildings are taller than six stories; many of their facades are of a traditional ochre color. Motorists drive with forbearance. Buses and underground transportation run on very frequent schedules; most of the underground stations are decorated with stimulating artistic motifs. Cultural attractions are numerous.

The Swedes are a modest, restrained, quiet people, with a seriousness or gravitas that I appreciate. Swedes reflect, applying intelligence to their daily lives and problems as well as to political, economic and social issues. Americans roar about aimlessly; most can't think, prefer to be told what to do and to do it. So there I was in Stockholm, a bright spot in wartime illuminated by innumerable candles, traditions and enterprises.

"In Sweden," I was told, "it is simple. Many people live simply. Not poorly."

"Generally life is very good," someone else said. "I used to live in Great Britain. I made it back to Sweden. And my life has gone upwards."

Sweden, a nation of 8.9 million people, is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary form of government. It is a country celebrated in Marquis W. Childs' classic study, *Sweden: the Middle Way*, as a constructive compromise between capitalism and socialism. In Sweden, "social and economic forms have evolved with far less conflict than in the rest of the world," Childs observed.

Of course, Swedish society is not utopian. But it attempts to be egalitarian, to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number. That is why Sweden consistently receives minimal press in the United States, and that is why its economic difficulties are trumpeted: 6 percent unemployment (more if those in job retraining programs are included); the introduction of waiting periods for benefits and reductions in the size of payments; an expected Gross Domestic Product growth rate of 2.3 percent in 2003 and 2.1 percent in 2004; and in some cases the loss of export markets on which it is highly dependent.

Each time Childs returned to Sweden one thing more than any other impressed him: "The seeming wholeness of life... reflected in a calm, a poise, a certain health rare in our time."

That balance continues to exist there. It is palpable.

It is a balance essentially undisturbed by the immigration of workers from other European countries during the 1960s and the acceptance of war refugees in the 1980s and '90s. Today about one-fifth of Sweden's population are immigrants or have at least one foreign-born parent.

The most remarkable thing to me about Sweden is that it has been at peace since 1814 and maintains a policy of neutrality in foreign affairs to this day.

This is a great achievement which has brought great benefits. It enables Sweden to give its attention, energy and resources to peaceful endeavors, protection of the environment, a high standard of living, advanced technological development, excellent design of products and free life-long education.

This condition of peace did not come about easily.

Sweden has a bloody past of Viking marauding, Swedish peasant chieftains securing a foothold across Europe in eastern Russia (Novgorod and Kiev), civil wars, domination of the Baltic region and wars with Denmark. During the 17th century, Sweden emerged as a major power, which it remained until the early 18th century.

The Napoleonic wars were decisive for Sweden. It backed France, then chose one of Napoleon's marshals, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, to take the Swedish throne.

Bernadotte, as Charles XIV John, exercised unusual acumen. He switched Swedish support from France to Russia and England. The result was the Treaty of Kiel in 1814. Peace.

Repeated visits to Scandinavia since 1974 have for me brought up a lot of questions: Why has life in the United States become so unpleasant? Is it still possible to change the destructive trends here? Could the United States go through a similar transition from a war-making power to a peaceful state?

What would it take for such a change to occur? Must the American people continue to refuse to learn anything from history or from other peoples' experience?

ARMED WITH PRINCIPLES

By Ali Abunimah

In February, Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old college student from Olympia, Washington, wrote an e-mail from Gaza to her family back home. Corrie observed, "I don't know if many of the children here have ever existed without tank-shell holes in their walls and the towers of an occupying army surveying them constantly from the near horizons. I think, although I'm not entirely sure, that even the smallest of these children understand that life is not like this everywhere." Corrie wanted to change those children's reality. On March 16, she was crushed to death by an Israeli army bulldozer as she attempted to prevent the destruction of a Palestinian family's home.

The Israeli army investigated itself and exonerated its personnel of any responsibility in Rachel Corrie's death. But photographs and eyewitness accounts show Corrie was clearly visible, wearing the bright red vest worn by all members of the International Solidarity Movement, the peace group that uses such non-violent means as positioning activists as "human shields" around the occupied territories to protect Palestinian civilians.

On April 5, Israeli troops in the West Bank town of Jenin shot Brian Avery, 24, of Albuquerque, NM. Avery suffered serious wounds to his head and face from a heavy caliber machine gun, at a time when no clashes were reported in the area.

And on April 11, Thomas Hurndall, 21, a British citizen, was shot by Israeli forces near Rafah, in Gaza, as he escorted a group of Palestinian children out of the line of fire. Hurndall is on life support in an Israeli hospital, with a gunshot wound to the head and there is almost no hope of recovery. Again, there was no fighting reported in the area, and, like Corrie, photographs show that Hurndall wore a bright red vest.

Many activists fear these shootings are part of a pattern, and that Israel is deliberately targeting internationals, so that it can carry out human-rights abuses unobserved. Whatever the truth, Americans and other foreign citizens are falling victim to Israeli tactics that have killed and injured thousands of Palestinians. A lack of accountability means that such incidents could increase.

Repeatedly, the international community has caved when faced with Israeli defiance. The difference between the docile international community, on the one hand, and individuals like Corrie, Hurndall and Avery, on the other, is that these individuals refused to be turned back. They left the safety of their lives to go unarmed, except with their principles, into harm's way, because they believed someone had to act where governments refused to do so.

When you look at their ages and backgrounds, Corrie, Hurndall and Avery are similar to the American and British men and women fighting in Iraq. Although Corrie served this country's highest ideals as faithfully as any soldier, the United States has not insisted that those who killed her be held accountable. For Avery and Hurndall, there is no 24-hour news coverage, and no special airlift to bring them home to an appreciative nation. Their families and friends are left to cope with these devastating tragedies alone.

At the beginning of Israel's crackdown on the Palestinians, we could anguish at the deaths of strangers, like 12-year-old Muhammad al-Durra, or the innocent Israeli teenagers murdered in 2001 by a Palestinian suicide bomber at a Tel Aviv discotheque. Almost two years later, with victims mounting, no one has the emotional capacity to mourn for so many. But the killing of Corrie, and the shooting of Avery and Hurndall, renew for me the sense of personal anguish at the fate of strangers. This is not because the victims are American or British, but because their presence in one of the world's most dangerous places was not an accident of birth. They came for love of humanity and with a thirst for justice, and paid an unbearable price.

8 Ali Abunimah is co-founder of *ElectronicIntifada.net*.



SEPTEMBER 28, 2000:

Flanked by 1,000 armed Israeli soldiers, Ariel Sharon visits al-Haram al-Sharif, the third holiest site in Islam, sparking the second Palestinian Intifada. The visit, approved by then-Prime Minister Barak, is designed to demonstrate Israel's "sovereignty" over Jerusalem, which it has illegally occupied for decades. Sharon is elected Prime Minister of Israel the following February.

AUGUST 8 - 19, 2001:

Fifty foreign civilians, mainly from the United Kingdom and the United States, take part in the first ISM campaign, witnessing and protesting the brutality of occupation and the injustices perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian civilians.



TIMELINE

DECEMBER 16 - 31, 2001:

The second ISM campaign begins. Over 70 international activists join the "Campaign Against Occupation." This campaign focuses on key towns and villages in Occupied Palestine in which nonviolent resistance is active, and includes solidarity visits to villages that have recently been hard hit by Israeli forces using tanks, helicopters and F-16s.

MARCH 29, 2002:

The third ISM campaign coincides with the first day of a new IDF initiative to re-occupy the West Bank. ISM co-founder Adam Shapiro makes international news while reporting on the situation from Yasser Arafat's Ramallah compound as the Israeli military re-occupies the city.

Later that week, Israeli forces invade each Palestinian city in the West Bank (with the exception of Jericho) and embark on weeks of curfew and full military occupation. International activists continue to arrive. By the end of April, hundreds of foreign civilians have come to the Occupied Territories to help with the delivery of food, accompaniment of ambulances and medical personnel, and to act as human shields in cities, towns and refugee camps. ISM activists break curfew and Israeli orders of closed "military zones" (i.e. civilian areas) to assist in the humanitarian effort, arriving before aid organizations and maintaining a presence throughout Israeli raids and assaults. Additionally, ISM activists are the first to start documenting the human rights abuses perpetrated against Palestinians through interviews and documentation of destruction.

"WE'RE NOT PRO OR AGAINST ANY GROUP. WE ARE PRO-FREEDOM AND

CRACK

ISRAEL RAIDS ISM HEADQUARTERS, BARS PEACE ACTIVISTS FROM GAZA

By JED BRANDT

Israeli military forces are trying to stamp out the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), a nonviolent direct action group active in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On April 16, Israeli Army Chief of Staff Lt. General Moshe Yaalon announced that he had given the order to "take the ISM out," because it limited the "freedom of action" of his troops. Over the last week, he made good on his order.

On May 9, Israeli police and military forces raided the Media Office of the ISM in Beit Sahour, as well as the nearby Palestinian Center for Rapprochement. The Israelis confiscated and damaged computer equipment and files, and detained three women - one Palestinian volunteer and two internationals, both of whom the Israelis have pledged to deport as part of a new general strategy barring international observers from the Occupied Territories. With the ISM's media coordinators under lock and key, Israeli forces detained two British peace activists entering Gaza through the Erez checkpoint. Detentions spread the next day to the West Bank where three internationals were grabbed in the town of Tulkarem.

"We will do what every law-abiding country does with those whose activities are viewed as disruptive, such as those of anti-global campaigners. They will be firmly escorted to the airport and deported," said a spokesperson for the Israeli government. "They [the ISM] operate in restricted military areas and ignore our warnings for them to leave. The army has been lenient with them and the result has been dangerous and tragic."

The raids are only the most recent Israeli escalation targeting the ISM. In mid-March Rachel Corrie, an ISM volunteer from Olympia, Washington was killed. This was followed by a quick

succession of incidents in which clearly identified and unarmed internationals were shot.

As lethal force is being used with increasing frequency against internationals, media stories originating in the Israeli and American press are insinuating links between the non-violent activists and various Islamic groups with few sympathizers in the West.

Israel deployed this lethal combination of shootings, media static and arrests on the cusp of an expected surge of young European and North American activists coming to the area as schools go on summer break.

The message from the Israeli state is clear: Do not come. Few activists, it seems, are listening. The ISM estimates that several dozen internationals are currently in the territories, and other delegations are preparing to arrive, including several from the New York area.

"The ISM has no plans to leave the Palestinian areas nor to reduce our actions or our efforts," said Huwaida Arraf, the group's co-founder and spokesperson. Arraf saw the recent crackdown as a "further attempt" by Israeli forces to hide the "brutality of the daily Israeli military actions against the Palestinian people." She pledged to take up the detentions, arrests and deportations at the diplomatic level.

"Our delegation this summer will be the same size as last year," said Steve Quester, a member of Jews Against the Occupation, and veteran of several ISM campaigns. "Israel fears nonviolent resistance. They don't know how to fight it. Now they're just giving internationals the same treatment Palestinian nonviolent resistance has gotten for years."

ISRAELIS DEMAND VISITORS SIGN RIGHTS WAIVER

Since the ISM began in 2001, Israeli border guards have refused entry to suspected peace activists. The Israelis have

now added a new mandate to this largely ineffective tactic. Now, all internationals entering the Occupied Territories must sign a statement that certifies they are not peace activists and absolves the Israeli occupation forces of responsibility if they shoot the visitor.

Amnesty International was denied entry to the Gaza Strip on May 9 when members of an observation team refused to sign the document. The group said, "The signing of 'waivers' does not absolve the Israeli army of its responsibility," expressing concern that "one aim of these new and drastic restrictions is to prevent outside monitoring and scrutiny of the conduct of the Israeli army." Amnesty also expressed worry that the restrictions will lead to more killings in Gaza and called on the army to end the use of excessive and unlawful force.

NONVIOLENCE UNDER THE GUN

When most of the world's attention was fixed on the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, Israel began a clear and abrupt policy of targeting internationals. On March 16, Rachel Corrie was the first to die. While she was acting as a human barricade to stop an illegal house demolition, an Israeli military bulldozer ran her over, crushing her under its blade. Several eyewitnesses said she was deliberately run over. Despite a flurry of media attention and condemnations from predictable quarters, the policy continued. Since then, the pace of violence has accelerated.

The ISM has relied on the "first world privilege" of its members for its non-violent action against the occupation. With the recent spate of killings and revised policy of suppression, this tactic seems to have run its course.

In meetings throughout the ISM network, and among other groups, discussions are heated as to how the movement will adapt. Some activists are



APRIL 1 - MAY 10, 2002:

Israeli troops lay siege to Palestinians taking refuge in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. On May 2, 10 ISM activists enter the besieged church with water, food and supplies, dodging Israeli occupation soldiers. A further 13 activists, successfully working as decoys, are arrested by Israeli soldiers. ISM activists remain with Palestinians in the church until the siege ends on May 10. Meanwhile, Israeli forces level the city center of Jenin in fierce fighting. ISM members provide some of the only on-the-ground coverage.

SUMMER, 2002:

Hundreds of international activists flood the Occupied Territories to participate in the ISM's Freedom Summer Campaign: "54 days of nonviolent, direct action by Palestinians and Internationals to promote freedom and justice for Palestine - one day to symbolize each year that Palestinians have lived under occupation." These activities include helping Palestinians cross Israeli checkpoints, protecting Palestinian homes from demolition and providing international and media presence at nonviolent Palestinian demonstrations.

First deportations of ISM activists begin. Dozens more, suspected of being ISM activists, are denied entry at Israel's border.

MARCH 16, 2003:

American ISM participant Rachel Corrie, 23-years-old, is crushed to death by an Israeli army bulldozer as she attempts to prevent the destruction of a Palestinian family's home in Rafah in Gaza.

APRIL 5, 2003:

Israeli troops in the West Bank town of Jenin shoot ISM participant Brian Avery, 24, of Albuquerque, NM. Avery suffers serious wounds to his head and face from a heavy-caliber machine gun.



APRIL 11, 2003:

ISM activist Thomas Hurndall, 21, a British citizen, is shot by Israeli forces near Rafah as he escorts a group of Palestinian children out of the line of fire. Hurndall remains on life support in an Israeli hospital.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS IN THE ISM

"While the primary purpose of the ISM has been to engage in and support the Palestinian unarmed, civilian-based freedom struggle against occupation, as the aggression of the Israeli military against Palestinian civilians has increased, the ISM has had to take up a role in providing humanitarian assistance and protection by using their status as internationals to escort doctors, ambulances, schoolchildren and other civilians to work, hospital and school..."

"Over the course of the past year and a half, the Israeli military and government has used various tactics in efforts to delegitimize our message. Some of you in the media have repeated or suggested the accusations yourselves: that we are 'young and naive,' that we are 'trouble-makers,' that we are 'pro-Palestinian.' We're Palestinian-led, but not pro-Palestinian. We're not pro or against any group. We are pro-freedom and against occupation and injustice."

NYC

LOCAL EXTREMISTS TARGET CUNY STUDENT PAPER

ARAB STUDENT POET COMPARED TO "AL-QAEDA"

The Jewish Defense Organization has launched a campaign of harassment targeting the *College Voice*, a Marxist student newspaper at the College of Staten Island (CSI). The *Voice's* publication of "Stones of Freedom" by Omar Hammad, a poem saluting the Palestinian *Intifada*, apparently provoked the JDO into action.

The paper and the poet were barraged with threats after their contact information was posted to the JDO's website. Hammad was called a "filthy Arab extremist" and, along with the paper's staff, was compared to al-Qaeda and other "anti-American" and "anti-Semitic" forces.

The JDO has called a rally on campus demanding that CSI President Marlene Springer ban the paper. JDO spokesman Steven Wexler told the *Staten Island Advance* that the rally would be an effort to "strangle the *College Voice*." The JDO descends from the late Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League, a racist group linked to numerous acts of violence and intimidation in both the United States and Occupied Palestine.

"Even to be mentioned in the same breath as anti-Semitism is disturbing. It goes against everything I believe as a Muslim," said Hammad. "Stones of Freedom" was his first submission to the paper, which accepts writings from a variety of perspectives. A Staten Island native, Hammad said he is not uncomfortable on campus, fearing only a few people. While he did not report the threats to local authorities, Hammad says he is taking them seriously.

The *Voice's* strident political style has often clashed with CSI's generally conservative campus culture. It is funded through student activity fees.

President Springer responded to the JDO's demands in a statement, which said that she has a responsibility as president of an academic community to uphold freedom of expression "that is protected by our constitution," and also to foster an environment free from all expressions of bigotry and intolerance.

Citing security concerns for the student body and their staff, the *Voice* cancelled a "free speech" rally set to counter the JDO's event. The paper's staff thanked supporters and said that accusations from a "minor group such as the JDO will not and cannot shut down the *College Voice*."

— Jared Burton

AGAINST OCCUPATION AND INJUSTICE." — FROM THE ISM RESPONSE

DOWN



REALITY SINKS IN: ISM volunteers recover Rachel Corrie's passport on the day she was killed. PHOTO: Palsolidarity.org

concerned that "tank chasers" will sign up for the danger with little comprehension of the situation. Others are focused on practical responses like using larger groups and taking more measured steps to counter Israeli incursions. No one in the movement has proposed ending the delegations.

BLINDING THE WORLD

Human rights workers aren't the only people concerned about the use of lethal force in Gaza. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has called for a "full and transparent" investigation into the fatal May 2 shooting of award-winning filmmaker James Miller.

Miller was working on a documentary for HBO in the town of Rafah, which has been the epicenter of Israeli violence against internationals. Miller was investigating Israeli claims that large numbers of house demolitions in the area were necessary to curtail the smuggling of arms via tunnels to the nearby Egyptian border.

"We demand a full and transparent investigation into this shocking incident,"

said CPJ acting director Joel Simon. "The Israeli army must punish those responsible for James Miller's death."

Simon added, "We believe that the failure of Israeli authorities to conduct serious investigations and punish those who have harmed journalists in the past has fostered a climate of impunity and recklessness among Israeli troops, making indiscriminate fire acceptable."

MEDIA WAR

In the weeks leading up to Israel's announcement of a zero-tolerance policy towards peace activists, unfounded allegations of ISM connections to Islamic

and terrorist groups began popping up in the Israeli, American and British press.

CNN, the BBC and the Israeli press have run several stories repeating Israeli allegations that ISM members had given sanctuary to members of Islamic Jihad and that they possessed weapons. More recently, there have been stories claiming that the two British suicide bombers who recently attacked a nightclub in Tel Aviv had met with activists in Gaza en route to a memorial for Rachel Corrie. An ISM spokesperson called attempts to link their activities to fundamentalists or suicide bombers "reprehensible."



SNAPSHOT OF THE VIOLENCE

Israel has occupied Palestine since 1948, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967. The total number of Palestinian deaths since Sept. 29, 2000 is 2,298. Another 22,693 Palestinians have been injured. 12,737 Palestinians have had their homes demolished. 768 Israelis have been killed and 4,858 Israelis have been injured.

IN BRIEF

HALLIBURTON REDUCES NIGERIA'S TAXES WITH BRIBES

Halliburton has admitted that one of its subsidiaries paid \$2.4 million in bribes to a Nigerian official in exchange for tax exemptions. The international oil industry company, formerly headed by Vice President Dick Cheney, said it uncovered the payments during an audit.

WEST AFRICA IN PENTAGON CROSSHAIRS

The Pentagon is shifting its military presence away from traditional allies like Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Germany as it looks to expand its control into strategic new regions. NATO Supreme Commander U.S. Gen. James Jones recently said NATO is planning to deploy a quick-reaction force of between 2,000 and 3,000 troops in West Africa as early as October. The White House wants West Africa to be the source of 25 percent of U.S. petroleum imports by 2015, up from 15 percent in 2000.

EXXON NETS RECORD PROFITS IN PART DUE TO THE WAR IN IRAQ

ExxonMobil earned a record \$7 billion in the last quarter or roughly \$3.2 million per hour during the first three months of 2003.

WALTER SISULU (1912-2003)

Walter Sisulu, veteran of the South African freedom struggle, died May 5, 2003 in Johannesburg. Sisulu left home for Johannesburg at 15 and worked as a baker's assistant, domestic servant, dairy worker, factory laborer and gold miner, joining the African National Congress (ANC) in 1940 where he met Nelson Mandela and future ANC President Oliver Tambo.

"During the past 62 years our lives have been intertwined," said Mandela, lamenting the loss of his old friend and confidant. "We shared the joy of living, and the pain. Together we shared ideas, forged common commitments. Together we savored the taste of freedom."

U.S. PAYS VOTESCAM COMPANY \$11 MILLION

In an attempt to track illegal immigrants, the U.S. Justice Department has paid ChoicePoint \$11 million to supply detailed personal information on millions of Latin American citizens. The data appears to come from voter registries and citizen identification databases but ChoicePoint refuses to say how it obtained the information. ChoicePoint is also the company that purged thousands of qualified voters in Florida, leading in part to the "election" of George W. Bush.

KFC HALTS FOWL PLAY

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) scored a victory May 7 when KFC relented in the face of protests and agreed to treat chickens in the company's 29 slaughterhouses with more care. KFC President Cheryl Bachelder pledged to provide the chickens with 30 percent more living space, cabbages and corn, and "mental and physical stimulation." The birds will also get more electricity in the baths that are used to stun them before they are slaughtered.



AN OCEAN OF VICTIMS: Amputees loiter at Freetown shelter in Sierra Leone.

On April 9, Congress passed the Clean Diamond Trade Act to stop the use of "blood diamonds" as funding for some of the world's most brutal regimes. Yet while many elected officials and diamond industry insiders congratulate themselves on the new legislation, most in the non-governmental and humanitarian community wonder if it will really make a difference, as it relies on lax criteria and questionable self-monitoring.

The Clean Diamond Trade Act, whose sponsors included Representatives Amo Houghton (R-NY) and Charles Rangel (D-NY), mandates that the United States abide by the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). The KPCS is a new international diamond certification program intended to halt the trade in blood diamonds. The term "blood diamond," or "conflict diamond" as most in the diamond industry prefer, refers to diamonds used to fund wars and other atrocities in many parts of Africa, including

Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Warring groups in these countries have used diamonds to buy arms and perpetrate violent acts against civilians. As of July 2000, NGOs estimated that blood diamond-related violence had caused over 50,000 deaths in Sierra Leone, 650,000 deaths in Angola and 1.7 million deaths in the DRC, as well as hundreds of thousands more injuries, mutilations and rapes.

The Kimberley Process, named after the South African diamond mining town of Kimberley where it originated, prohibits the import or export of rough diamonds unless they are in a tamper-resistant container with a valid Kimberley Process Certificate from a KPCS member country. To date, over 70 countries, including all the major diamond-producing and trading nations, are KPCS participants.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), however, are expressing concern that the

KPCS is inadequate. On April 30, representatives of over 200 NGOs attended the First Plenary Meeting of the KPCS in Johannesburg, South Africa. They welcomed the international commitment to break the link between diamonds and conflict in Africa, but lamented governments' failure to set stringent guidelines and require regular, independent monitoring of all participants.

The KPCS defines conflict diamonds only as rough diamonds originating from "illegitimate" governments, such as rebel groups who take power through violent means. It fails to address the fact that the records of violence and human rights abuses in some of the "legitimate," U.N.-recognized governments in diamond producing countries are just as bad as those of their "illegitimate" counterparts. Thus the KPCS rewards brutal regimes by allowing them to continue trading blood diamonds.

For example, the DRC is a KPCS member, even though sales of blood diamonds from its territory have contributed to the death and mutilation of almost million of its people, as outlined by Amnesty International's October 2002 report, "Making a killing: The diamond trade in government-controlled DRC."

NGOs initially called for the definition of conflict diamonds to include diamonds sold by recognized governments with records of human rights abuses, not just those sold by rebel groups. They also asked that the regulations apply not only to rough diamonds but also to polished stones and jewelry. And most importantly, they lobbied for independent monitoring of the Kimberley Process. "But that was too restrictive, so now there is no criteria for membership," said Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International's Advocacy Director for Africa.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) was largely responsible for the failure of the KPCS to adopt the stricter regulations.

"The kind of resistance we're seeing is on the part of governments — both importers and exporters — especially because of the WTO rules," Akwei said. "Within the WTO, there are provisions for human rights which allow for exceptions to the rule, but there was a lot of push back from member countries. They were afraid to set a precedent to policing trade and goods in a way that would slow down trade and lead to other countries retaliating by imposing restrictions on other products."

"A DIAMOND IS FOREVER"

The slogan that changed the rules of engagement

Did you know that diamonds were not always popular or expensive in America? The only reason diamonds cost so much more today than other precious gems is because the market is controlled almost entirely by the South Africa-based De Beers diamond cartel. According to a *Washington Post* report, De Beers produces half of the world's diamond supply and controls about two-thirds of the entire world market. This price-fixing practice is the reason De Beers is not allowed to conduct business on U.S. soil.

Before the 1930s, the gems of choice for engagement rings were not diamonds, but opals, rubies, sapphires, etc., which were seen as more exotic symbols of love, according to the book *Twenty Ads that Shook the World*, by James B. Twitchell.

The idea of matching diamonds to romance came from the N.W. Ayer advertising agency in 1947, when the "A Diamond is Forever" ad campaign was launched for De Beers. That phrase forever changed the diamond industry, and in 2000, *Advertising Age* magazine named it the slogan of the 20th century.

The campaign has convinced women that they should receive a diamond ring for their engagement and men that they should pay "two months' salary" for that ring to show how much their love is worth. The average diamond on a ring is marked up 100 to 200 percent.

According to the Diamond Information Center at J. Walter Thompson (De Beers' advertising agency), the U.S. diamond jewelry market is now valued at \$27.4 billion, accounting for nearly half of global diamond jewelry sales.

Not surprisingly, the all-important diamond engagement ring category continues to grow despite the sluggish economy, proving once again that the diamond engagement ring is a cultural imperative that can withstand economic hardships. 84 percent of all U.S. brides received a diamond engagement ring in 2002, driving demand 2.5 percent higher than in 2001. The current retail value for the U.S. diamond engagement ring market is valued at a healthy \$4.3 billion.

— VANESSA HRADSKY

Blues for Nina

Nina Simone, the legendary blues and soul singer, died on April 21 at her home in France at the age of 70.

Though Simone recorded dozens of albums and performed countless concerts, her legacy is much larger than her recorded material. With her roots-blues chants, jazz-piano stride and stomped-down spirituals, Simone articulated the pain and hopes of black people throughout the diaspora.

She performed civil rights benefits in the Deep South. After the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., she penned the ultimate memorial "The Man of Peace is Dead," still heard on black radio stations to this day. Her soul-stirring songs "I Wish I Knew How It Feels to Be Free" and "Young, Gifted and Black" were as much an influence on the black liberation movement as Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon.

Furthermore, with her chiffon gowns and nonplussed attitude with audiences, Simone was the first popular grand diva, before every one-hit female artist ran the term into the ground.

Nina Simone was born Eunice Waymon in 1933, the daughter of a Methodist minister. A musical prodigy, she learned the piano by age six and played ecstatic spirituals. However, her early talents could not shield her from racism. In her autobiography *I Put a Spell on You*, Simone recalls a recital where her parents were forced to sit in the back of the auditorium in favor of a white family. Simone refused to play until her parents were seated up front. "The day after the recital I walked around feeling as if I had been flayed and every slight, real or imagined, cut me raw. But the skin grew back again a little tougher, a little less innocent, and a little more black," Simone said of the event.

In the tradition of blues women, she transformed herself, dropping Eunice Waymon and taking on the name Nina Simone, after the actress Simone Signoret. She played seedy bars in Atlantic City, often thumping her piano to wake up the drunks during her performances. She was as adept at the popular song as the blues, scoring a numbers of hits including "My Baby Just Cares for Me" and a rendition of Gershwin's "I Loves You Porgy."

Despite her recording success, underhanded record deals prevented her from reaping the rewards. Simone was a tireless performer, often jamming for three or four hours, teasing her audiences into sing-alongs. Simone's blending of multiple genres speaks to a blues philosophy, where there is no separation from the secular and the sacred — in fact the secular is sacred. Like Duke Ellington and John Coltrane, Simone moved freely and seemingly effortlessly though gospel and the blues.

Her freewheeling style left her off the pop charts, which increased her sense of bitterness. Like James Baldwin and Josephine Baker, Simone spent her later years in France, returning to the States only occasionally to play jazz festivals. When asked by a *Details* reporter what effect the song "I Wish I Knew How It Feels to Be Free" had on black people, Simone replied, "I give the song to black America and they threw it back."

However, Simone was experiencing a revival at the time of her death. She performed with Mary J. Blige, and her song "Four Women" was covered by Talib Kweli. It appears the high priestess of soul will be remembered for generations to come.

— KAZEMBE, MAY 2003



THE NEW YORK CONNECTION: Local wholesalers re-ship diamonds back around the world.
PHOTO: Erick Satterlund

Loose regulations are not the only shortcoming of the Kimberley Process as far as the NGOs are concerned. NGOs have long deplored the child and slave labor practices of the diamond industry, but the KPCS fails to acknowledge the abuses of workers rights that occur in "legal" mines.

Another problem is that the KPCS will be easy to circumvent. The origins of diamonds are almost impossible to discern because they are relatively pure and are created under similar geological conditions, so it would be simple to transport blood diamonds from a country banned from the KPCS to a "legitimate" country from which they could be shipped.

Joseph Schlusel, president of a large New York diamond wholesaler called The Diamond Registry, admitted that having to identify a rough diamond's origin would not be easy: "I am as good a diamond expert as most, but I can tell you it is practically impossible to tell where a diamond comes from, except if it's from Canada, which

brands its diamonds." He added that in New York, "probably 2 to 5 percent of diamonds we see came from conflict areas."

The KPCS also falls short in the area of enforcement. Globally, "each country will send a delegation of Kimberley Process participants to monitor the efforts. Statistics will be collected and compiled by each member country and sent to Abbey Chikane, the Chair of the Kimberley Process, in Johannesburg," said Akwei. And yet he added, "no clear guidelines have been set up to expel violators from the Kimberley Process."

Despite all the KPCS' flaws, there is optimism that the diamond industry can be improved. "The reforming of an industry is an ongoing process. Prior to this, the diamond industry, which has global retail sales of \$56 billion a year, was as opaque as an industry can possibly be. The Kimberley Process allows for some transparency though its tracking system," declared Akwei.

THE LUCRATIVE DIAMOND TRADE

Diamonds pass through many hands on their trip from the mines to the world's retailers, who sold \$56 billion of diamond jewelry in 1999. En route, nearly 70 percent of them go through De Beers' Diamond Trading Co. in London. In 1999 they added \$1.6 billion of their inventory to the amount mined, bringing to \$8.4 billion the total value of diamonds produced that year.

ROUGH DIAMOND PRODUCTION (IN BILLIONS): \$8.4

\$1.8 Botswana	\$1.6 Russia
\$0.8 South Africa	\$0.4 Australia
\$0.6 Angola	\$0.8 Other
\$0.4 Namibia	\$1.6 Stockpiles

Diamonds gain 40 percent of their value, and lose up to half their weight, as they are manufactured into cut and polished stones. In 1999 wholesalers paid \$11.8 billion for these finished diamonds.

CUT & POLISHED DIAMOND PRODUCTION (IN BILLIONS): \$11.8

\$5.6 India	\$0.6 South Africa
\$3.1 Israel	\$0.5 U.S.
\$1.6 Thailand	\$0.4 Belgium

In 1999 retailers paid \$13.1 billion for their finished diamonds, buying from a mix of wholesalers and De Beers sightholders. How did retailers push their final sales to \$56 billion? By incorporating the diamonds into earrings, bracelets, rings and other objects of desire.

WHOLESALE DIAMONDS (IN BILLIONS): \$13.1

\$5.6 India	\$0.6 South Africa
\$3.1 Israel	\$0.5 U.S.
\$1.6 Thailand	\$0.4 Belgium

Source: *Fortune Magazine* Feb. 19, 2001



EL INDEPENDIENTE

LOS DERECHOS DE LOS INMIGRANTES Y LA LUCHA POR LA PAZ

BY ELIZABETH MARTÍNEZ
TRADUCIDO POR SILVIA ARANA

El clima anti-inmigrante que con frecuencia impera en los Estados Unidos, se intensifica en tiempos de guerra y de recesión económica. Hoy, mientras el gobierno de Bush continúa con su política militarista, los derechos humanos y civiles de los inmigrantes están bajo ataque.

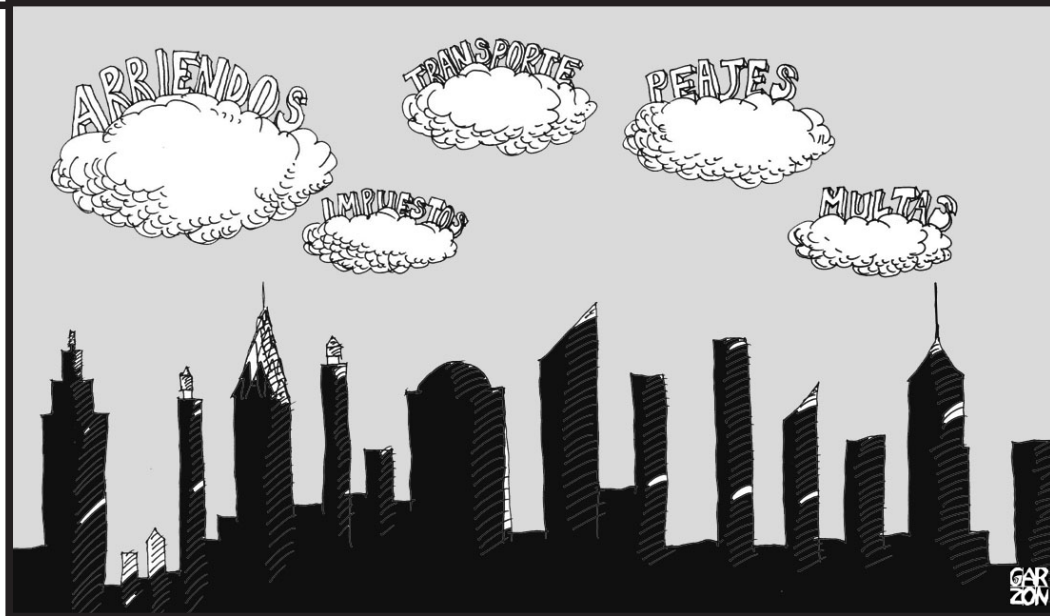
Por ello, los defensores de los derechos de los inmigrantes debemos involucrarnos en la lucha contra el militarismo. No podemos deslindarnos de esta responsabilidad diciendo que la guerra está lejos. No podemos decir que los inmigrantes no conectan la guerra con sus necesidades diarias de subsistencia. No podemos decir que es suficiente trabajar por la legalización, aunque este sea un objetivo tan importante.

Al mismo tiempo, el movimiento contra la guerra, necesita ver que los derechos de los inmigrantes y la situación bélica están estrechamente relacionados. Si el movimiento contra la guerra logra establecer esta conexión será la mejor manera de involucrar y movilizar a la clase trabajadora, especialmente a la gente de color. Si logramos confluir, uniéndolos ambos movimientos, nos convertiremos en la fuerza poderosa que hace falta para cambiar la política de Estados Unidos.

¿Cuáles son algunas de las conexiones claves? Desde el 11 de septiembre del 2001, hemos presenciado cómo miles de inmigrantes han sido hostigados, echados, detenidos e incluso deportados, en nombre de “la guerra contra el terrorismo”. Se han establecido nuevos centros de detención a lo largo de las fronteras; miles de trabajadores de aeropuertos han sido y están siendo echados de sus trabajos porque no son ciudadanos.

Las tres leyes antiterroristas sancionadas hasta ahora —Acta Patriótica, Acta de Seguridad de Aviación y Transporte y Acta de Reforma de Visa y Mayor Control de Fronteras— tienen como blanco a los inmigrantes. La guerra contra Irak presentó más excusas para la represión. Ya sabemos como es este tema. Durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial más de 120 mil japoneses-americanos fueron “internados” en campos de detención.

Los derechos de los inmigrantes a satisfacer sus necesidades humanas básicas también están siendo atacados. Los recortes del presupuesto a los servicios sociales ponen en peligro las vidas de las personas mientras se incrementa el presupuesto para la maquinaria militar que ya ha llegado a los 335 mil quinientos millones de dólares. Las posibilidades de los inmigrantes de obtener seguro



social, cuidado infantil, atención médica, educación se han venido reduciendo paulatinamente y ahora, la caída es drástica.

También sabemos que las guerras que hace Estados Unidos son racistas. Como es profundamente racista el militarismo como política internacional. La gran mayoría de los inmigrantes que llegan a Estados Unidos en la actualidad son personas de color. La vigilancia selectiva de personas afroamericanas y latinas, que ya era un problema antes del 11 de septiembre del 2001, se ha intensificado y se ha extendido. Ahora afecta a un amplio rango de grupos étnicos de inmigrantes: personas de origen árabe y del sudeste asiático, a musulmanes, a cualquier hombre que lleve en su cabeza algo que no sea una gorra de béisbol —por no decir, una mujer que “debe ser” terrorista puesto que se ha cubierto la cabeza con un pañuelo.

El militarismo de Estados Unidos es racismo en su máxima expresión, como lo demuestra la historia de intervenciones durante el período posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial. El término intervenciones es una manera diplomática de describir acciones que van desde los golpes de estado contra gobiernos elegidos democráticamente hasta invasiones militares directas para deponer gobiernos que no favorezcan los intereses de Estados Unidos. Esta historia —que se extiende desde América Latina hasta las islas del Pacífico, Asia, África, todas las tierras de gente de color— ha causado un gran éxodo desde esos países hasta Estados Unidos. La guerra exterior y la guerra doméstica son parte de la misma cadena de racismo y militarismo que oprime a los inmigrantes.

La conexión es demasiado clara. La lucha por los derechos de los inmigrantes y la lucha contra el militarismo de Estados Unidos son las dos caras de una misma lucha.

Elizabeth Martínez es la directora del Instituto por Justicia Multiracial.

VENDEDORES AMBULANTES

BOLETÍN DE PRENSA, MAYO DE 2003

El Primero de Mayo, el Comité de Vendedores Ambulantes, de El Proyecto de los Trabajadores Latinoamericanos, celebró el Día Mundial del Trabajo participando en una Audiencia Pública en el City Hall, con el objeto de exponer sus necesidades y pedir que se respete su dignidad y derecho a trabajar honradamente.

Más de 200 vendedores de Brooklyn que forman parte del Comité, continúan realizando gestiones para conseguir sus objetivos. Luego de su participación en la primera Audiencia Pública, en los primeros días de abril, en la que expusieron sus necesidades y alternativas de solución ante los políticos de la ciudad, los Vendedores han mantenido una intensa actividad organizativa; tuvieron sesiones de intercambio de experiencias con organizaciones de vendedores ambulantes de Queens y Manhattan y consiguieron el apoyo de negociantes de la comunidad, iglesias y organizaciones comunitarias quienes respaldan el derecho de los Vendedores Ambulantes de ser parte del sistema económico de la comunidad y piden que la ciudad modifique la ley y emita licencias para que puedan trabajar legalmente.

Según Oscar Paredes, Director Ejecutivo de El Proyecto de los Trabajadores Latinoamericanos, los Vendedores Ambu-

lantes deben “tener una licencia o autorización que les permita continuar ejerciendo su actividad de manera ordenada y en condiciones más dignas. También de esa manera pueden ser parte del desarrollo económico y laboral de su propia comunidad”, agrega que “debemos promover una nueva “cultura de la seguridad” que esté respaldada por políticas y programas adecuados para lograr lugares de trabajo más justos”.

Por su parte, Libia, una vendedora ambulante de Brooklyn hizo énfasis en la necesidad de que se acojan sus solicitudes, pues según dijo: “El 11 de septiembre trajo muchas desgracias y una de ellas es el cierre de fábricas, nos quedamos sin trabajo y en consecuencia de esto los hispanos somos los más afectados. Somos discriminados porque no hablamos inglés. Los policías nos intimidan, nos maltratan cuando somos arrestados. Pedimos al departamento de la Policía nos den protección porque nosotros tenemos más miedo a la policía que a los delincuentes, queremos que dejen de decomisar nuestros productos, basta de tanto acoso, nosotros somos trabajadores tratando de sobrevivir y mantener a nuestras familias”.

Quienes estén interesados en conseguir información sobre el Comité de Vendedores Ambulantes pueden comunicarse con El Proyecto de los Trabajadores Latinoamericanos. Teléfono: 718.486.0800.

PETRÓLEO MEXICANO POR INMIGRANTES

Reporta *La Jornada* de México, que líderes legislativos republicanos para asuntos internacionales aprobaron esta semana una resolución que condiciona un acuerdo bilateral sobre migración con México a la apertura de Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) a la inversión estadounidense.

“Cualquier acuerdo sobre los temas de migración entre Estados Unidos y México deberá incluir también un acuerdo para abrir Pemex a inversiones de empresas petroleras estadounidenses”, afirmaron integrantes republicanos del Comité de Relaciones Internacionales de la Cámara de Representantes. Legisladores demócratas condenaron la maniobra de los republicanos al vincular una reforma migratoria a la apertura de Pemex a capitales estadounidenses, y señalaron esto demuestra que los republicanos están “en contra de los inmigrantes”.

La resolución afirma que “Pemex, el monopolio paraestatal mexicano, es ineficiente, plagado de corrupción y necesita una reforma sustancial y de inversión privada para ofrecer suficientes productos petroleros a México y Estados Unidos para nutrir el futuro crecimiento económico, lo cual podría frenar la migración ilegal a Estados Unidos”.

Esta resolución subraya las intenciones de la cúpula republicana de intercambiar inmigrantes por petróleo.



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